



March 17, 2010

To: **COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS**

From: Kirk A. Springsted, Vice President, Administration,

Re: ***Senate Bill No. 422 "AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF  
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES' PILOT PROGRAM"***

My name is Kirk Springsted and I am the Vice President of Administration for the Connecticut Community Providers Association (CCPA). CCPA represents organizations that provide services and supports for people with disabilities and significant needs including children and adults with substance use disorders, mental illness, developmental, and physical disabilities. I am here to speak in favor of Senate Bill 422.

Let me start by thanking Senator Slossberg, and the Committee for taking the time to consider this important measure. This is a measure which we view first and foremost as preserving the jobs of those who can least afford to lose their employment.

In Connecticut, the prevalence for disability among working age people is 10%. The rate of employment for people with severe disabilities is at 28%. No other segment of society eligible to be part of the work force has such poor employment statistics. A by-product of a low rate of employment rate for people with disabilities is that their economic well being is substantially worse than for those without disabilities. This has been true for a long time.

Going back to 1977, the Connecticut Legislature created a preferred purchasing program (PA 77-405; CGS 17b-656) to address low employment rates for people with disabilities. The statute promotes employment opportunities for people with severe disabilities through government contracting. Since the original legislation, CCPA has administered the state preferred purchasing program created by this Public Act. Through the program, community providers supply state agencies with needed products and services rendered by people with disabilities. Since the

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original legislation, the program has produced employment, employment training, work hours and wages for people with disabilities in a variety of work settings, including janitorial services, temporary office workers, commercial laundry, landscaping, and manufacturing.

**The Preferred Purchasing Program highlights for last year include:**

- \$2.6 million in wages (bringing the total over the last ten years to \$23 million for workers with severe disabilities)
- Employment opportunities for 819 people with disabilities

In 2006, the Connecticut Legislature modernized this program by creating the Qualified Partnership Pilot Program (PA 06-129 CGS 4a-82). The purpose of this bill was to establish a pilot program that would promote employment for people with disabilities and economic disadvantages with commercial sector janitorial contractors and to evaluate the effectiveness of such a program for use on a larger scale as a method for addressing the employment needs of these two groups. That bill was also instrumental in resolving differences between two competing groups advocating for standard wage opportunities for people with disabilities and economic disadvantages while protecting the jobs of others through worker retention language.

**The Pilot Program highlights for last year include:**

- Partnerships formed between Commercial Sector Janitorial companies and Community Providers
- Six Pilot Contracts
- Employment for people with disabilities and economic disadvantages in commercial work settings

The original intent of the Pilot was to make the program permanent after the four year pilot, but we are recommending extending the Pilot an additional three years. This will protect the jobs of people with disabilities during the current difficult economic climate and allow us to examine the cost benefit of the program to the State of Connecticut outside the cloud of the current economy.

Cost benefits items include:

- Payment of Standard Wages and Benefits resulting in improved financial self-sufficiency
- Reduction of entitlements such as Social Security Disability; Medicaid; and Food Stamps
- Improved self-esteem and improved social skills

We urge you to support this vital legislation and help protect employment opportunities for people with disabilities.